unit 4　Parent-Child Relationships

UNIT EXPECTATIONS

While reading this unit, you will:

- analyze theories and research on the subject of parent-child relationships and their role in individual and family development, and summarize your findings

- analyze decisions and behaviours related to parental and caregiver role expectations, including the division of responsibilities for childrearing and socialization

- analyze socialization patterns and the roles of children and parents in various historical periods and ethnocultural contexts

- analyze current issues and trends affecting childrearing and socialization, and speculate on the changing role of children

- demonstrate an understanding of the cycle of violence and the consequences of abuse and violence in interpersonal and family relationships

- use appropriate social science research methods in the investigation of issues affecting individuals and families in a diverse society

- access, analyze, and evaluate information, including opinions, research evidence, and theories, related to individuals and families in a diverse society

- analyze issues and data from the perspectives associated with key theories in the disciplines of anthropology, psychology, and sociology

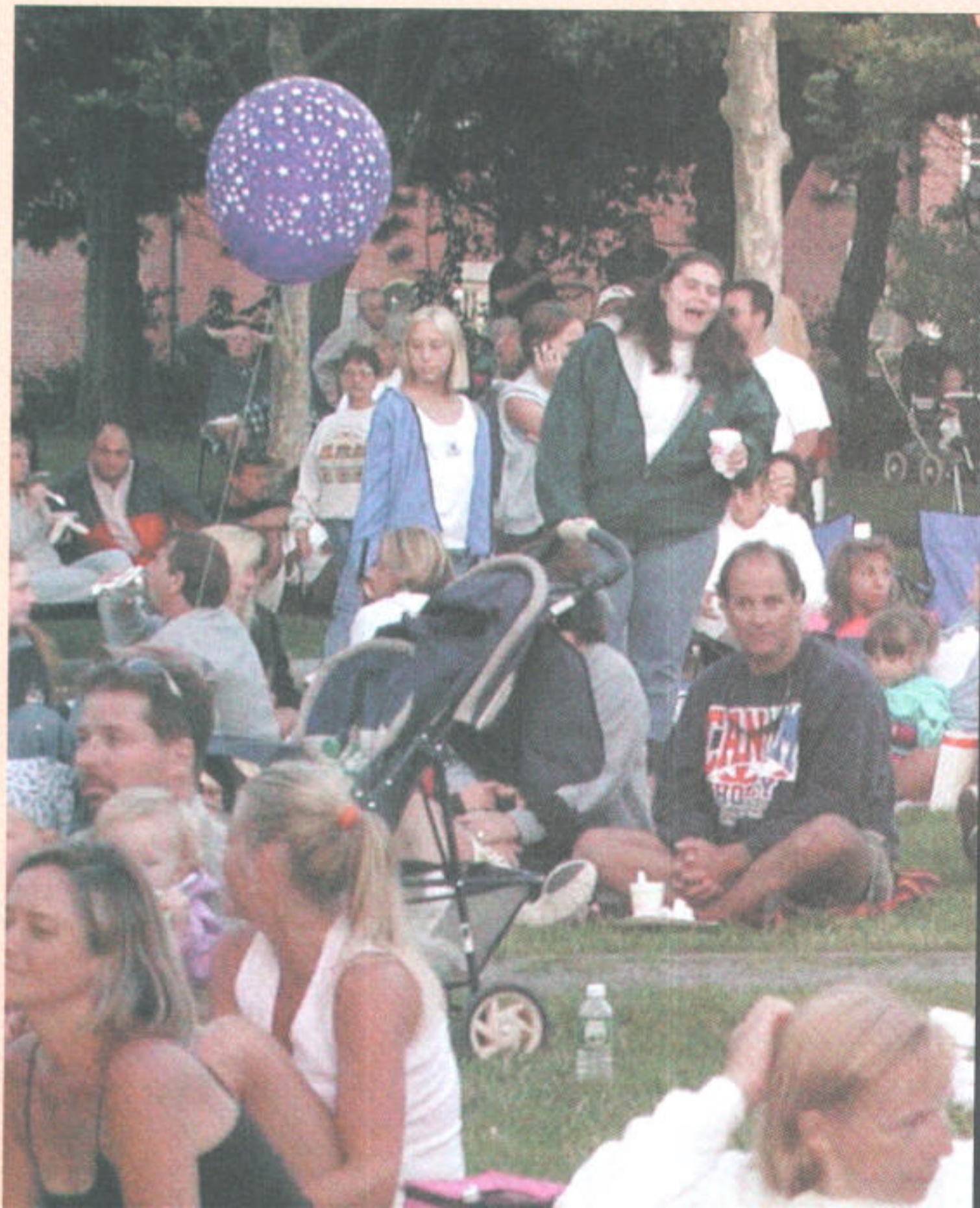- communicate the results of your inquiries effectively

Parenting can be one of the most rewarding experiences adults will have in their lifetime.

OVERVIEW

In this unit, parent-child relationships will be explored through an analysis of related theories and research. The roles of children and parents will be examined, with a focus on the diversity of these roles. The history of socialization patterns, parent-child relationships, and the roles of children and parents in Canada will be traced. The trends in Canada today will be evaluated. Next, the role of parent-child relationships in individual and family development will be examined. The parental and caregiver role expectations will be explored, including the division of responsibility for childbearing and socialization. Finally, specific issues and trends that have had an impact on Canadian parent-child relationships will be discussed.

Parenthood Today

CHAPTER EXPECTATIONS

While reading this chapter, you will:

- describe patterns and practices in childbearing in various cultures and historical periods
- analyze the roles of children in the family and society in various cultures and historical periods, taking into consideration expectations for pace of development, rites of passage, participation in education or labour, and the nature of parent-child relationships
- describe current perceptions, opinions, and demographic trends related to childbearing and childrearing and speculate on the significance of these trends for parent-child relationships
- explain the factors that influence decisions relating to childbearing
- demonstrate an understanding of research methodologies, appropriate research ethics, and specific theoretical perspectives for conducting primary research
- use current information technology effectively to compile quantitative data and present statistical analyses of data or to develop databases
- identify and respond to the theoretical viewpoints, the thesis, and the supporting arguments of materials found in a variety of secondary sources

KEY TERMS

biological clock
childhood
delayed
  parenthood
family wages
female infanticide
fertility
fertility rate
genetic diseases
infant mortality
  rate
infertile
lineage
parenthood
parenting styles
stereotypes
sterilization
voluntary
  childlessness

Although the family is ever-changing, it continues to survive. In Canada today, the majority of couples, whether married or cohabiting, have children.
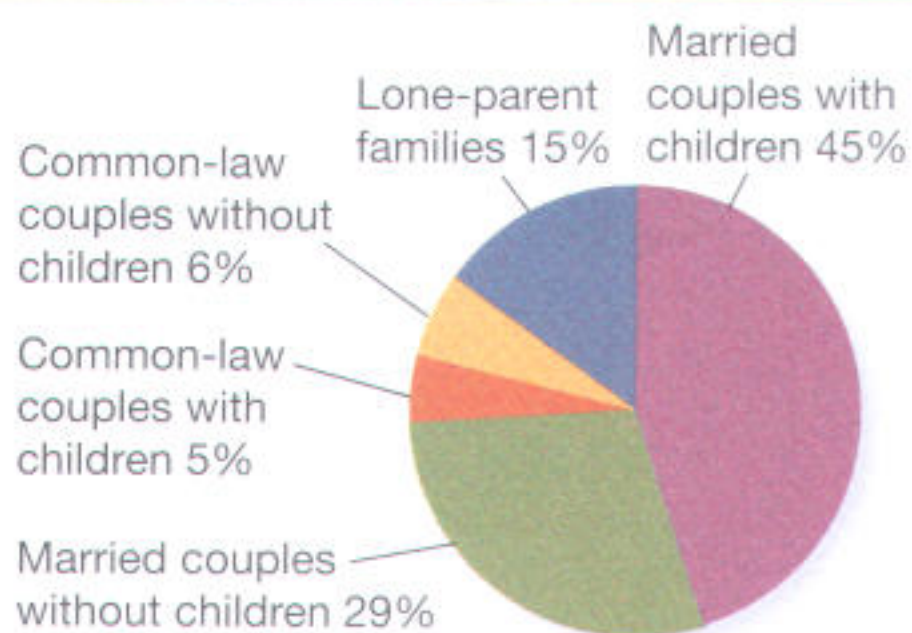
CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, parent-child relationships will be studied and the role of parenthood in Canada will be examined. Insight into parenthood, parent-child relationships, and the role expectations of parents and children will be developed, from both a historical and a cultural perspective. Childbearing will be explored, and demographics will provide a foundation for determining such factors as the changes in the reasons for having children and the size of families. The theoretical perspectives in this chapter will be based on sociology.

Families in Canada

The Vanier Institute of the Family has analyzed the composition of Canadian families based on the information from the 1996 census. According to the pie graph on this page, the majority of Canadian families have children living at home. It should be noted that some of the families listed may have children who do not live at home, as the designation "without children" includes never-married children who do not live at home. Having children is still seen as a natural and desirable part of a committed relationship.

Canadian Families With Children Living at Home

Married couples with children 45%

Lone-parent families 15%

Common-law couples without children 6%

Common-law couples with children 5%

Married couples without children 29%

Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada publication, *1996 Census of Population*.

Looking Back at Family Life

To fully understand families with children today, people need to examine the ways couples in the past have moved beyond the couple relationship and made the transition into **parenthood**. There are several myths about the typical family of the past. Suanne Kelman (1998) discusses the three great myths of the history of family life:

1. Until the twentieth century, family groupings consisted of large extended families with at least three generations in one home.

2. The nuclear family is a form unique to the industrialized world.

3. For most of history, the family was merely an economic unit until the West invented romantic love.

Kelman states that the belief that the nuclear family is a recent development is false, and that household size has been relatively small in much of Europe and North America for centuries (Kelman, 1998). In fact, homes filled with many generations of the same family were the exception, not the rule. "Despite what some radical critics believe, the nuclear, monogamous family is not a recent innovation. It's been present in some societies from the dawn of history" (Kelman, 1998, p. 2).

In other societies prior to the twentieth century, large families were the norm. In Asia and Africa, the paternal grandmother would reside with the family (Kelman, 1998). In other areas of the world, a large communal family was the norm. In parts of Nepal, India, and Tibet, the family consisted of a couple, their sons, and a communal wife whom the sons shared and who

bore all the children for the next generation. This arrangement was used to keep the population growth small, since one woman cannot have as many children as a number of women can. Also, there were few natural resources in this area for sustenance, so keeping the family population growth to a minimum was essential. In these areas, this family type was considered the norm. This family type shows that the meaning of natural behaviour in human families is debatable, and that instinct does not guide human behaviour in the same way it guides other animals (Kelman, 1998). This family arrangement, viewed from a functionalist perspective, suggests that the society cannot afford to have large numbers of children, and thus has devised a system that places very restrictive limits on population growth.

In Europe during the Middle Ages, people had children for reasons that depended more on a family's social class than anything else. An upper-class family took great care to ensure that their child married someone who was suitable for carrying on the family line. People had children in order to continue this family line. Lower-class families needed children to contribute their labour to the family unit. As both classes had children for particular reasons, they also valued children differently (Mandell, 1995). The upper classes often sent their children away until they were ready to join the adult world. Children spent their infancy with a woman who was hired to breast-feed another's baby, their early childhood with a governess, and their school years at boarding schools. They would return home as young adults to take their place in society (Kelman, 1998).

In contrast, women in the lower classes breast-fed their own infants. From the time they could walk, the children would accompany an adult of the same gender during the day to learn his or her chores. The children's labour contributed to the family from an early age, so their membership in the family was valued. Children of lower-class families left home in their early teens to work. Some would work in the community and still reside with their family, while others would be sent to a distant community to live and work. Most were expected to contribute at least part of their wages to the family income (Mandell, 1995).

Even though people think that nuclear families are a modern "invention," they have been in existence for quite some time.

"Being a parent, whether father or mother, is the most difficult task humans have to perform. For people, unlike other animals, are not born knowing how to be parents. Most of us struggle through."

—Karl Menninger

The history of parenting is often remembered with a nostalgic view and an assumption that it was better than it is now. A close look into history helps put today's parenting into perspective. If you look far enough back, you can see a wide variety of **parenting styles**. In Europe between 1500 and 1700, fathers had absolute rule over the household. Women and children were considered his property, to do with as he pleased. Children often suffered brutal treatment at the hands of their parents and could be sold as property (Mandell, 1995). From a modern perspective, many past customs exhibited brutality toward children that would be horrifying by today's standards. Customs such as wrapping infants tightly in cloth for extended periods of time (swaddling), or beating a child are no longer acceptable, and would be subject to child abuse investigations if they were practised today. In contrast, during the later years of the Roman Empire, children might be considered spoiled by today's standards. Children were indulged, and fathers made sacrifices to keep them happy (Kelman, 1999).

Family History in Canada

To gain a better understanding of Canadian families today, it is necessary to study the changes they have undergone throughout history. The goal of most parents then was not to raise happy, well-adjusted children, but to have someone to pass on the family name and its traditions, as well as to provide the necessary labour to maintain the family unit (Kelman, 1999).

Aboriginal Families

Family history in Canada begins with the hunter-gatherer societies of the Aboriginal Peoples. These families lived in groups and travelled together. They were egalitarian, since the contributions of all members of the family were valued by the entire band (Ishwaran, 1983). The division of labour was based primarily on sex. The men and older boys went out to hunt in the forests, while the women, older girls, and young children worked in the clearings, tending to plants and the few animals they kept. The labour performed by the children was an important part of the family's success. These hunter-gatherer societies existed in Canada from the beginning of its history, well over 13 000 years ago (Mandell, 1995) and in various areas of the country. Some Inuit of the Canadian North still practise a hunter-gatherer lifestyle.

After 1500 B.C.E, many groups of Aboriginals began to give up their nomadic way of life. They started cultivating the land and planting and harvesting crops. This was the beginning of agriculture in North America. By the 1500s there were two types of Aboriginal communities in Ontario: hunter-gatherers in the north, and those that relied on agriculture in the south. Families worked together in a co-operative manner and shared most duties, including child care (Ishwaran, 1983). Women and younger children took primary responsibility for agriculture, while men and older boys hunted locally. Families within the large group were nuclear in nature (Mandell, 1995).

In hunter-gatherer societies, all family members, including children, were an important part of the team. Children were valued and cherished.

The arrival of the Europeans in North America between 1500 and 1700 meant the end of their former way of life for many Aboriginal groups. The European involvement in Aboriginal ways was to change their culture forever. Before the Europeans' arrival, Aboriginal societies hunted only what they needed. As a result of the Europeans' demand for fur, they began to hunt more, taking the men away from their families for longer periods of time. The Europeans introduced diseases into Aboriginal communities, which killed many of them. They also introduced alcohol to the Aboriginal Peoples, trading it for furs. As there were few European women in North America at that time, many European men lived with or married Aboriginal women, thus blending two cultures that differed greatly in their family values and customs. The children born of these unions were raised by parents of two different cultures that had very different views on children's roles.

The marriages were considered temporary, and when the fur traders returned to Europe, their Aboriginal wives and children would often return to their original families. In the mid- to late- 1700s, the Hudson's Bay Company forbade their employees from bringing their Aboriginal families back to Europe with them. The traders often retired to Eastern Canada or Britain, leaving behind their Aboriginal wives and children, and often married a European woman in their retirement. Many of the traders did make provisions for their Aboriginal families to receive support in the form of supplies from the trading company. Other traders would pass their Aboriginal wives and children on to an incoming trader. Aboriginal husbands readily accepted the

wives and children from marriages to fur traders. This reflects the strong kinship ties and the great love of children that is characteristic of Aboriginal society (Van Kirk, 1992).

The Aboriginal Peoples had a very different sense of family than the Europeans, whose society was very male-dominated.

> [Aboriginal] family relationships baffled Europeans [because of their] personal autonomy; lack of hierarchy; spousal interdependence; abundant love for their children; abhorrence of inflicting corporal punishment, fear, or humiliation on children (Mandell, 1995, p. 22).

They placed a high value on their children and raised them with care. Corporal punishment of children was not accepted. When French missionaries first arrived in Canada, they could not understand the democratic parenting practices of the Aboriginal Peoples (Kelman, 1999). The missionaries made it their goal to correct what they thought were poor parenting practices. They felt that the Aboriginal Peoples allowed their children too much freedom and that the lack of corporal punishment would "spoil" them (Mandell, 1995).

Looking at the changes in the Aboriginal Peoples' family life from the arrival of the Europeans to the present time, from a systems perspective there is dramatic evidence of how a change in one part of the system can affect the entire system. The Europeans changed the Aboriginal Peoples' way of life and the roles of Aboriginal adults and children from equality, caring, and under-standing to the European way of male dominance and control. Prior to the coming of the Europeans, Aboriginal men and women shared an equal partnership with each other and a great love of their children. This was seen as improper by European religious leaders. Their devaluing of women and children caused conflict and role confusion in the Aboriginal community. The change in status and role for women and children altered the entire social fabric of Aboriginal communities.

European Families

In the 1600s and 1700s, marriage and family patterns in Canada varied greatly. In Québec, romantic love was not usually the basis of marriage. In the middle and upper classes, marriages were arranged based on the size of the bride's dowry as well as her potential to bear children (Mandell, 1995). Men were concerned with maintaining biological ties to their families, continuing their good **lineage**, and protecting the family wealth through inheritance. Children were an important part of continuing the family legacy, and they were valued as a means of passing on family traditions and wealth (Daly, 1995). In

farming and peasant families during this time, marriage and children were viewed as economic necessities. Women were valued for their ability to work and contribute to the family enterprise. They shared a fairly equal role with their husbands, and their marriages were like partnerships. Children were necessary for the labour they provided, and often farmers had large families to provide enough labour to run the farm. Children were allowed to be consumers only when they were very young. As they grew up, they were expected to be producers for the good of the entire family. Family tasks were differentiated by sex, with the boys working farther from the home and the girls working closer, modelling the roles of their parents. The home was the centre of all domestic, economic, and social activity (Gaffield, 1992). Children were raised and educated by both of their parents as well as their older siblings, other relatives, and unrelated members of the household, usually servants (Hareven, 2000). Many families cared for elderly relatives, and children were valued for their future contributions to the family for this purpose.

Schooling was not compulsory for children during this time. It was supplied through religious groups. Upper-class boys were more likely to be given formal instruction than any other group. However, among farmers and peasants, girls were much more likely than boys to be taught basic literacy skills. Children were often sent away from home to serve as apprentices. Girls apprenticed in household tasks, and usually left home around the age of 10 and stayed with their employer's family until they married (Mandell, 1995). Boys apprenticed for a wider variety of occupations, including carpenters, coopers, accountants, doctors, lawyers, and blacksmiths. They usually left home between the ages of 9 and 10. In many working-class families, older brothers and sisters acted as role models and were responsible for helping their siblings move into the work force (Hareven, 2000). Children were only allowed to marry when their parents could afford to do without their incomes (Mandell, 1995).

Difficult conditions that existed at the time, such as poor sanitation, disease, inadequate housing, and a lack of medical knowledge, led to high infant mortality rates as well as shorter life spans for adults. As a result of this, many children were orphaned at a young age. Often, children who still had one living parent were sent to live with relatives or stepfamilies, or they were sent away as servants (Mandell, 1995). Older children

Children went out to work at a young age, since families needed their wages in order to survive.

frequently played a role in raising the younger children, since they had more contact with them than their parents did. This happened for many reasons, such as the early death of parents, the age range and number of children in a family, and the fact that older children taught younger ones how to do their family chores and other tasks outside the family. Families had more children, and the spread in ages was quite large. Often, only the oldest children knew their parents as young people, while the younger children knew their parents when they were middle-aged or older (Hareven, 2000).

Families tended to live closer together, and grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins would reside in the same community. This gave children an extended kin group in the neighbourhood, but not in the same house. Due to the shorter life spans of adults, most grandparents did not live to see all their grandchildren grow up (Hareven, 2000).

Since women and children were considered the property of their husbands, they had no legal rights of their own. Many became victims of a violent husband or father. Those who acted in self-defence were tried in public and often put to death, to warn others not to follow the same path. One such example is Marie-Josephte Corriveau of Québec, who in 1783 admitted to killing her husband with an axe while he slept. Her body was hung in a public place for more than a month by the British authorities as a lesson to other women (Mandell, 1995). When viewed from a structural functionalist perspective, this is an example of the ways societies have tried to control its members. The harsh structure of the laws of the time functioned in a manner to keep women in their "proper" place, under the control of men.

Until the beginning of the 1800s, Canada's economy was based mainly on farming, fishing, lumbering, and some fur trading. Homes were still the centres for production, and the labour of all family members was still highly valued and necessary. However, two major changes occurred that forever altered Canadian family life.

1. Small-scale farms, which simply met the needs of the farm family, began to be replaced by large-scale commercial farms, which produced excess goods to be sold at market.

2. Employment moved from being home-based to factories and shops.

The economy changed from an agricultural base to an industrial base. As people moved from small farms to the city to find work, cities grew at a rapid pace. The West was opened up, and immigrants were brought into Canada to settle the land. Many changes in the family were brought about by these shifts in Canadian society. Families changed from self-sufficient economic units on

the farm with each member of the family contributing to the overall well-being of the family by working on the farm. When families moved to urban areas, every family member was sent out to work, and children turned over their wages to their parents in order for the family to survive economically. Women and children were often exploited in the workplace, labouring for long hours in poor conditions (Larson, Goltz, & Munro, 2000).

Later in the 1800s, men in unions fought for **family wages**, which was enough money to support a wife and children. Labour laws changed, and children were no longer sent out to work. Consequently, at this time, only about 5 percent of married women worked at a paid job, while the rest stayed at home and provided a nurturing environment for their growing children (Mandell, 1995). During the early 1900s, especially for the middle classes, few women were involved in the work force, because men were considered to be responsible for earning the family income. Women supported men by maintaining the household and raising the children (Mandell, 1995). Families became consumer units, and their lives depended on the male's income.

These changes influenced the roles of men, women, and children in families. Men's contribution to the family unit was the wages that he earned from his employment outside the home. His contribution to the running of the household was diminished and his parenting role changed from one of high involvement to one of provider of leisure activities and money (Hareven, 2000). Women gained sole responsibility for the functioning of the household and assumed primary responsibility for caregiving. They were seen to possess the characteristics more suited to childrearing, such as being gentle, patient, sweet, and comforting. Men were considered to have the characteristics of what was thought to be ideal workers, such as being aggressive, tough, and competitive. This increased emphasis on the differences between men and women led to a clear division of family roles based on gender. Children raised during the early 1900s had strong sex-role **stereotypes** (Mandell, 1995). Girls were socialized to be like their mothers and boys to be like their fathers. This division lasted until the early 1970s. From a systems perspective, the changes in the family system that made it the norm for men to be the sole provider had long-lasting effects on the contemporary family.

The roles of children also changed with this move to a consumer family. Children were no longer needed for their labour. They lost their economic value and became cherished for sentimental reasons. Compulsory schooling and restrictive child labour laws took children out of the labour force. In 1891, 13.8 percent of all children between the ages of 11 and 14 were employed; by 1921, the percentage was reduced to 3.2. Since children no

During the 1950s, very few women worked outside the home. Those who did, did so out of necessity, and were seen as incompetent mothers since they spent less time with their children than the average woman did.

longer went out to work, it became the mother's responsibility to ensure that her children were raised properly. The mother in the middle-class family was now valued for her contribution to the social and moral upbringing of the children. Her economic contribution to the family was no longer valued. Working-class women employed outside the home were considered to be economically productive as wives, but incompetent as mothers, since they were not at home providing proper guidance for their children (Mandell, 1995).

Families became smaller, as there was no longer the need for women to bear many children for the labour the children could provide. Homes evolved from a place for performing social, economic, and domestic activities to a private retreat, away from the rest of the world. Households became smaller, more specialized, and more isolated from the outside world (Larson, Goltz, & Munro, 2000). Many middle-class families moved farther away from relatives to seek work, so although grandparents were living longer, the children did not get to spend extended time with them, because of distance between residences (Hareven, 2000). The experience of the lower classes was different from that of the middle classes. The lower classes were dependent on kinship groups for the social and economic support of the family unit. Children of working parents were often cared for by the extended family (Mandell, 2000).

As the roles of husband and wife changed with this trend toward domesticity in the first half of the nineteenth century, the role of children changed also. Children were gradually removed from interaction with adults when they moved from the workplace and home into schools, as **childhood** became to be recognized as a distinct stage in development. As families became smaller, the age difference between parents and children lessened, as did the age difference between children. This, in turn, changed the nature of the sibling relationships. Children who were close in age were not expected to care for one another; consequently, the childrearing responsibilities of older children diminished (Hareven, 2000).

Before the 1950s, Canadian **fertility rates** had been in a century-long decline. After World War II, there was an unanticipated increase in the birth rate. In the 1960s, married couples who did not have children were considered selfish (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). Most women did not work outside of the home after they were married. They had a social support system in the community, since the majority of them were at home with their children during

the day. Mothers of baby-boom children were expected to stay at home and care for them (Haraven, 2000). From a social exchange perspective, the exchange of services between the male breadwinner, earning the income for the family, and the female homemaker, maintaining the family home and caring for the children, was considered fair. Therefore, this became the norm for the majority of couples during this time.

Families in Other Cultures

Examining the role of children in other cultures results in an understanding of the many differences in childrearing practices throughout the world. Children were raised in different ways, and there are differences in how they were valued. What one culture considers the norm today may have been the norm centuries ago in another culture.

The Classical Chinese Family System

The classical Chinese family existed for 2500 years prior to the beginning of the twentieth century. Social organization and customs remained relatively stable during this time, and thus the family structure that existed then is referred to as "the classical Chinese family." In the classical Chinese family, pregnant women were said to have happiness in their bodies. They were pleased at the birth of a son, who could carry on family traditions, but the birth of a daughter was not usually celebrated. Large, wealthy families were not as concerned about the sex of the infant as peasant families were. Peasant families had few resources to share with "unnecessary" children. Female infanticide was an accepted practice. Poor families did not value female children, because they would marry and leave the family just when they were old enough to make an economic contribution to the family through their labour (Queen, Habenstein, & Quadagno, 1985). Functionalists would view this undervaluing of females in terms of females' contribution to the economic well-being of the family. Since female children were not able to contribute much to their family of origin, they

Looking at the differences in the way boys and girls were treated in the past and in a variety of cultures enables us to appreciate the advances in gender equality that exist in North America and other countries today.

were not highly valued by them. From the functionalist perspective, the system that supported female infanticide served a purpose.

During the first two years of life, the Chinese child was kept close to the mother, usually sleeping with her during this time. The father maintained a distance from infants. Children were not trained or disciplined during infancy, and their mothers or servants met all of their needs. After the age of three, children were expected to have control over their bodily functions. At this time, another child was often born into the family. The new infant slept with the mother, while the older child slept with the father. After the age of four, children began training for adult life. Boys were sent to live in the male section of the household, while girls remained with their mothers to learn the duties of wife and mother. Boys were either tutored or were sent to school. Schools were places of strict discipline, and adults were respected without question. Boys who questioned authority were severely punished. Girls, however, were spared the harsh discipline that boys received at the hands of the schoolmaster and their fathers. As children became teenagers, boys were well trained to take on the role of head of the household. Girls learned to accept the fact that they would soon leave their families forever, since after marriage they became a low-status person in their husband's family (Queen, Habenstein, & Quadagno, 1985).

It is often difficult for Westerners to understand the values of different cultures. The custom of female infanticide practised by the Todas is one example.

The Toda Family

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, the Toda family of the Nilgiri Hills in South India practised childbearing rituals in a very different manner than the Western family. The culture was polyandrous, meaning there were many husbands to one wife. From the fifth month of pregnancy, the expectant mother was sent off to a mud hut on the edge of the village. After the birth, she lived in seclusion for another month, until the father came and his legal parenthood was established, after which she could return to her home. The Todas practised **female infanticide** for a number of years, meaning the female children were killed immediately after birth. If twins were born, one would be killed. The practice of female infanticide has been banned in the Toda culture.

Toda females were seen as inferior to males, and families could not support large numbers of female children. The role of females in the Toda society was severely limited,

and they were seen as impure and unclean because of bodily functions, such as menstruation and childbearing. The value of females to their family of origin was short-lived, as they were usually married off by adolescence. Male children were highly valued in the Toda culture (Queen, Habenstein, & Quadagno, 1985).

Buffalo were sacred to the Toda. Men maintained the dairy, and only dairy priests could tend to the herds and perform sacred tasks of churning and clarifying butter. Women were not allowed to tend the dairy, they could not walk on the same path as buffalo, and they could not cook foods that contained milk or products made from milk (Queen, Habenstein, & Quadagno, 1985).

Infants were kept in seclusion after birth. Babies' faces were kept covered from view until they were three months old. The sex of the baby determined how his or her face would be uncovered. The male child was brought to the front of a dairy and his head was touched to the threshold. He was then carried to a place where buffalo grazed. Then his face was turned toward the sun and uncovered. The female child was taken to the place where women received buttermilk from the dairy. There, her face was uncovered. This was an important ceremony for the Todas, since it demonstrated that, from birth, the male members of the society were given much higher status than the females.

The Todas were very fond of their children, and all adults felt a responsibility toward them. Toda mothers formed strong bonds with their infants and nursed them for two years. Children spent most of their time playing. Some of the games were imitations of the real-life roles they would assume in their adolescent years. Toda male children participated in caring for the buffalo as soon as they were able. Toda female children learned the domestic arts and were usually married by the time they reached adolescence (Queen, Habenstein, & Quadagno, 1985).

Developing an understanding of the role of children in other cultures allows people to compare the childrearing practices of their own culture today with those of other cultures in the past. The differences in how children were valued within their own families and the culture, as well as how they were raised, offer a different perspective on how children are valued and raised in a person's own time and culture.

Childbearing in Canada Today

Canadian couples in the twenty-first century who are considering having children have many more choices and face more complex issues than couples did in the past. The Canadian social system has changed. Institutions such as marriage have undergone significant adjustments. The transformation of

"The thing about having a baby is that thereafter, you have it."
—Jean Kerr

social norms in regard to sex roles, conception, and the equality of women are said to be contributing to the decline in Canadian fertility rates. Since the 1970s, marriage rates have fallen and rates of cohabitation have increased. Divorce rates have stabilized, but at a high level. It is estimated that 30 percent of all marriages since 1965 will end in divorce. People are postponing both marriage and babies. Contraception is widespread and very efficient. Couples who have had their desired number of children now perform permanent forms of birth control through tubal ligation or vasectomy (Balakrishnan, Lapierre-Adamczyk, & Krotki, 1993).

New attitudes toward marriage and childbearing have developed since the 1970s. In the past, lack of reliable birth control measures made children an inevitable part of married life. Now, couples choose when and if to have children. Children are no longer valued economically, but rather for their emotional fulfillment. They are seen as the entity that completes the married couple's relationship (Balakrishnan, Lapierre-Adamczyk, & Krotki, 1993).

Changing attitudes toward childbearing can be explained using the social exchange theory. Couples are looking to receive something back from their children in exchange for the time, energy, and money that they put into raising them. In this case, the parents are looking for emotional fulfillment and love from the child in exchange for the caregiving they provide.

Women and Work-Force Participation

Women are participating in the work force at a much greater rate than ever before. Their employment outside the home is an important variable in fertility rates. Traditionally, women worked until they married. This pattern is changing, since women are continuing to work after marriage and after the birth of children (Balakrishnan, Lapierre-Adamczyk, & Krotki, 1993). In the 1970s, one-third of couples were dual-earners. Today the number has risen to seven out of ten couples with children under the age of seven (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2002). There are many reasons why women stay employed outside the home. Many need to provide an income for their families, either as the primary earner in a lone-parent family or as a primary or secondary earner in a dual-income family (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2002). The contribution of women's wages is essential for many families to balance the family budget. In nearly half of all families, women's income contributes between 25 and 40 percent of the family income. In 25 percent of all families, women contribute half or more of the total family income (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2002). From a systems perspective, the work pattern of women has had an impact on all members of their families and on their families' lives.

Over the 1990 to 1999 period, the low-income rate among single-earner families, with or without children, increased. Among dual-earner families during the same time period, the low-income rate decreased. The second income gained from the work of women is a key factor to a family's climb from poverty (Sauvé, 2002).

Many women have invested much time and energy in building their careers. They gain satisfaction from pursuing their career goals and, for this reason, continue to work. Unplanned pregnancies are seen as disruptive to their career path (Daly, 1995). Work patterns outside the home and the social and psychological satisfaction gained from work are reasons why women are waiting to have children, and why they are having fewer when they do (Balakrishnan, Lapierre-Adamczyk, & Krotki, 1993). The majority of women are no longer at home caring for their children for long periods of time. Those who do take time off from work to care for their children do not have a large network of other stay-at-home parents to rely on.

Low-Income (Poverty) Rates After Transfers and Income Taxes for Couple Families with Children
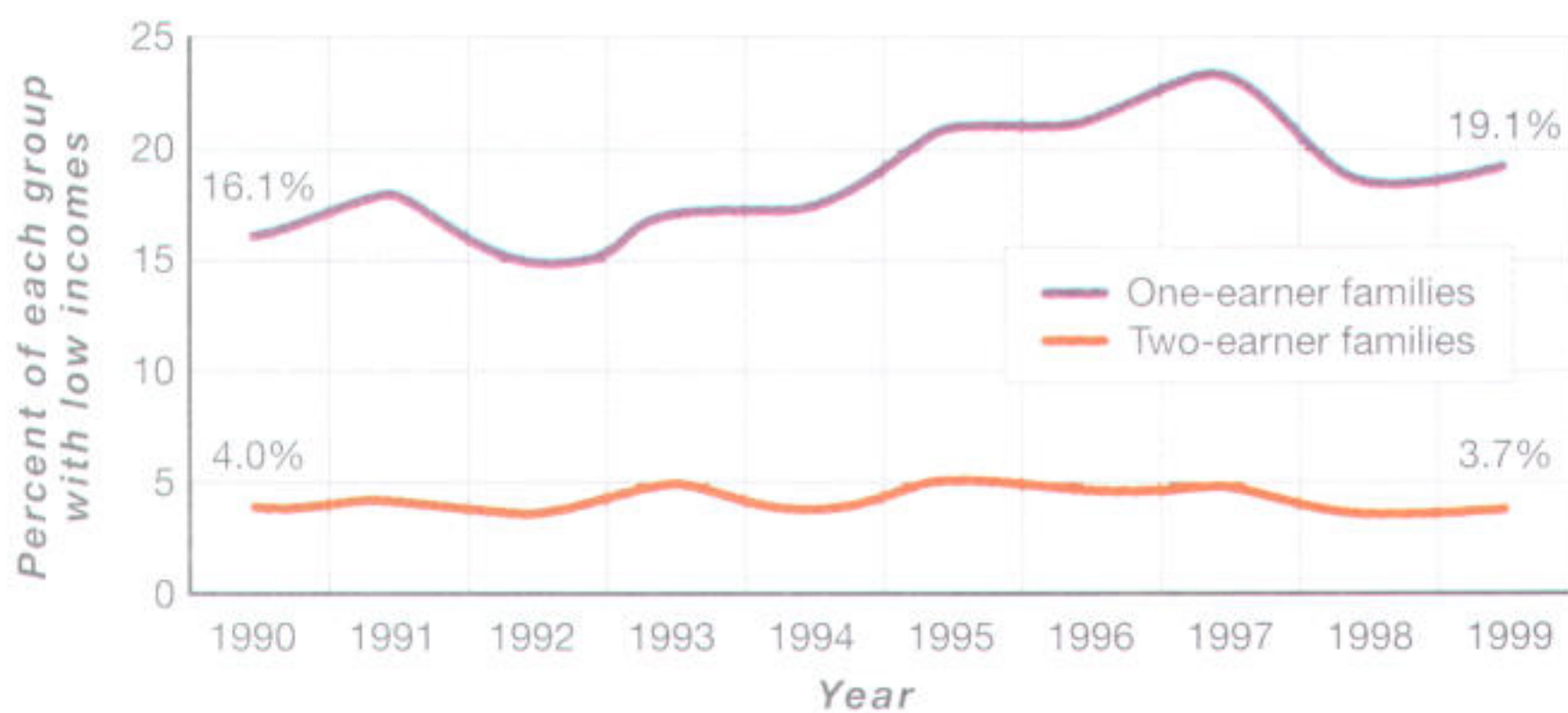
Source: Sauvé, R. (2002). *The Current State of Canadian Family Finances Report*. Okotoks, AB: People Patterns Consulting p. 30.

Advances in Medical Science

Medical developments have changed the way couples approach family planning. There are now safe and convenient methods of reliable contraception that allow couples some control over the timing of and years between children. A major shift in birth control practice is that younger women and men who have attained their desired family size can choose **sterilization** to maintain

a 1999 Angus Reid survey, Canadians between 20 and 39 years of age were asked about the total number of children they intended to have. Ninety-six percent of women between 20 and 29 years of age reported that they planned on having at least two children. Men of the same age group reported similar results. Whether or not all of these people actually do have children remains to be seen, but at least it is known that the majority of young Canadians intend to have children (Avard & Harmsen, 2000).

Number of Children That Women and Men Intend to Have*, by Age Group (1995)
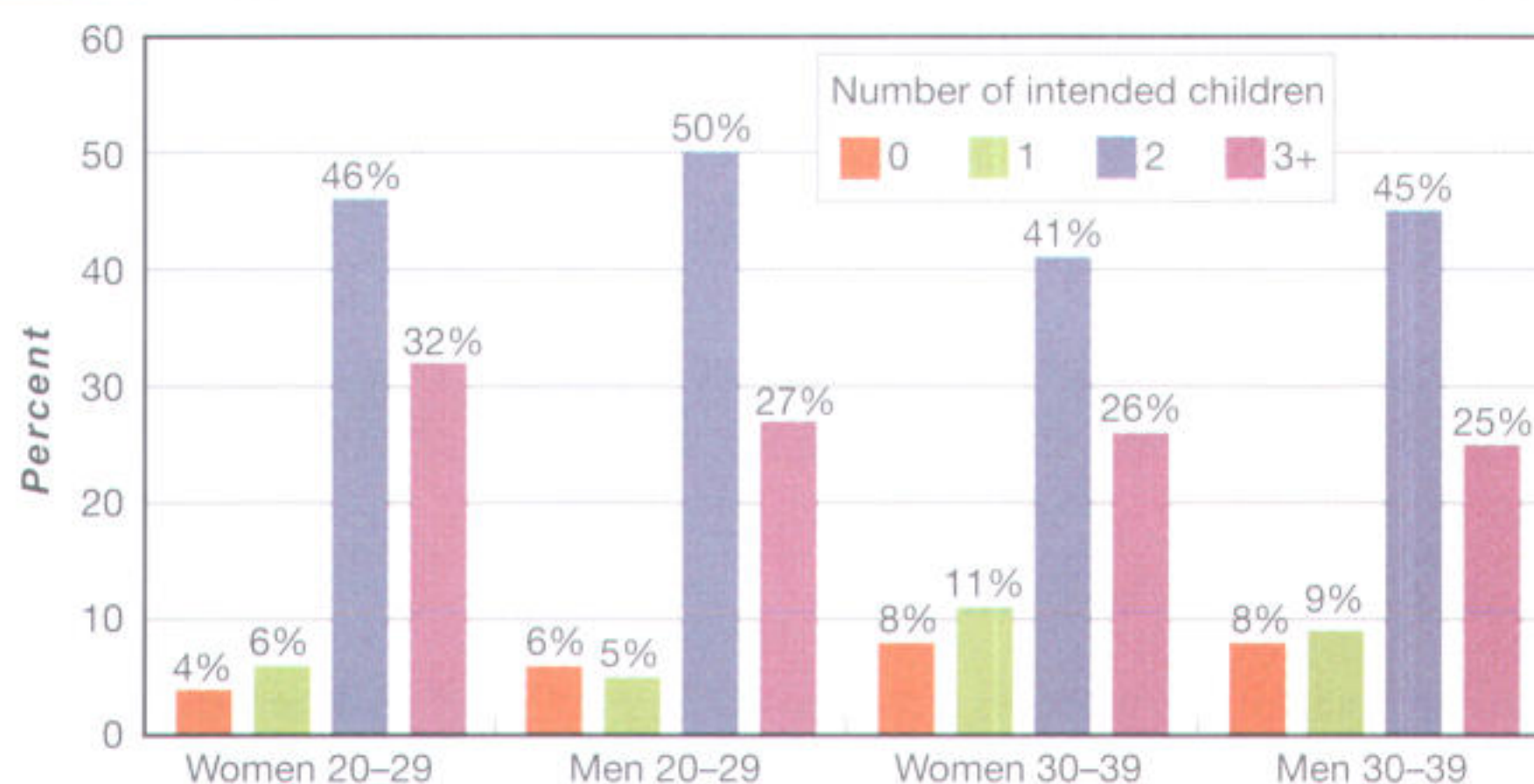
*As measured by the question "What is the total number of children you intend to have, including those you have now and are currently expecting?" The proportion of people responding "don't know" ranged from 12% among women aged 20–29 and men aged 30–39, to 14% among women aged 30–39.

Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada publication, *Canadian Social Trends*, Catalogue 11-008, Spring 1998.

Factors for Would-Be Parents to Consider

Young couples planning to have children must weigh all of the considerations carefully to come to a decision that is best for them and their future children. These factors (Campbell, October 2000) include:

- society and social values
- religion
- economic conditions and personal finances
- feelings about children
- psychological readiness

- genetic diseases that could be passed on to children

- pressure from peers, parents, and other family members

Canadian society encourages young couples to have children, since it needs to replace itself. Most faiths also encourage childbearing. Couples who attend faith services tend to have more children than couples who do not. Campbell notes that even though government and businesses do not seem to do enough to support families, they still assume that most people will become parents (October 2000). Peer pressure is another factor that influences a couple's decisions about when to start a family. Often when friends begin to have children, couples feel pressured to have children of their own. They feel left out of conversations and events that revolve around children. Parents and other family members also put pressure on young couples to have children. Often parents expect grandchildren soon after a couple is married. Siblings can also put pressure on a couple if they want to become aunts or uncles (Balakrishnan, Lapierre-Adamczyk, & Krotki, 1993).

Economics play a role in the decision and timing of childbearing. Many couples are delaying the birth of their first child until they have some measure of financial security, whether this is owning a home or having savings. Other couples feel it is important to establish themselves in a career prior to becoming parents. When the job market is good, it is easier for a member of a couple to take time away from work, since there are probably some jobs waiting upon his or her return. In tough economic times, when there are very few jobs available, this is not the case (Balakrishnan, Lapierre-Adamczyk, & Krotki, 1993).

Some couples avoid having children of their own because of the fear of passing on genetic diseases to their child. **Genetic diseases** include diabetes, anemia, hemophilia, sickle-cell anemia, cystic fibrosis, and Tay-Sachs disease, among others. Now, there are tests available to couples to determine if either partner is predisposed to passing on a genetic disease. From the results of these tests, couples can make informed decisions about whether or not they want to risk having a child with a genetic disease (Sasse, 2000).

When to Have Children

Once couples have decided to have children, they need to decide when they will have them. In the 1960s and 1970s, women had their first child when they were in their early twenties. Now, the average age at a first birth is when women are in their mid-twenties (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2000). Fertility rates between 1986 and 1997 show that most children are born to women who are between 20 and 34 years of age. Trends demonstrate that a

"Death and taxes and childbirth! There's never any convenient time for any of them."
—Margaret Mitchell

shift took place between 1986 and 1997. There was an overall decrease in the number of women having children in their twenties, but at the same time there was an increase in women having children in their thirties. This **delayed parenthood** will have an impact on Canadian birth rates, as women who begin childbearing later in life will have a shorter time in which to have children.

Women's Fertility Rates, 1986–1997					
Rate per 1000 women					
Age of woman	1986	1991	1995	1996	1997
15–19 years (includes births to women under 15)	23.01	25.98	24.49	22.34	20.19
20–24 years	78.74	77.50	70.53	67.28	64.07
25–29 years	119.01	120.33	109.69	105.82	103.88
30–34 years	72.52	83.63	86.77	85.51	84.44
35–39 years	22.30	28.27	31.26	32.22	32.52
40–44 years	3.15	3.88	4.83	5.06	5.19
45–49 years (includes births to women over 50)	.13	.17	.19	.20	.20

Note: The rate is determined by dividing the number of live births in each age group by the total female population in each age group.

Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada web site http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/People/health/health08.htm.
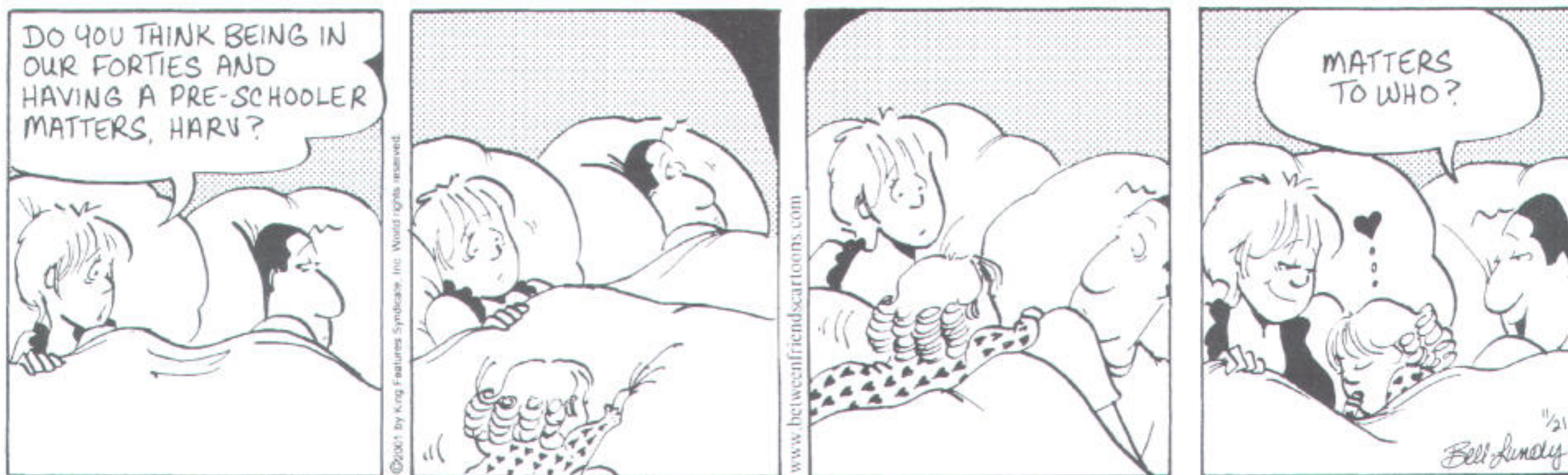
Delayed Parenting

The average age of a first birth has been increasing since the 1970s, and now sits at 27.1 years of age (Eshleman & Wilson, 2001). The greatest increase in first-time parents occurred among women who were between 30 and 34 years of age. That percentage rose from 14 percent in 1970 to 25.8 percent in 1982 to 30 percent in 1990. Couples who delay parenting tend to be well-educated, middle-class, and work-oriented (Schlesinger & Schlesinger, 1992).

Both women and men are staying in school longer. This longer period of education has had an impact on when they are starting their career, when they are getting married, and when they are starting to have children. Canadian couples are getting married later now than they did earlier in the twentieth century. The later couples get married, the later they start their family, and the fewer children they will have. The family size of those who

delay will be smaller, since the woman's **biological clock**, or the length of time that a woman's body is able to conceive and carry a child, limits the number of children she can bear. For couples who are career-oriented, a small family is more practical than a large one; consequently, a small family is the norm for couples who delay parenthood (Schlesinger & Schlesinger, 1992). From the symbolic interactionism perspective, couples who delay parenting are choosing to control their own destiny. Their fertility behaviour is controlled more by themselves than by older societal norms. In the past, these couples may have been considered too old to become parents, but now they have created new norms through their behaviour.

There is more support for delayed parenting now than in the past. Young couples are no longer rushed into parenthood and are often cautioned to wait until they are ready and established before having children. As medical technology develops, it is possible for women well into their forties to give birth to healthy babies. Many couples delay parenthood until they are psychologically and financially ready. Many dual-income couples delay parenting until they can afford the cost of caring for a child. They must be able to afford for one spouse to take an extended leave of absence from employment or to pay for child care. Often couples will save up for and purchase a home prior to starting a family (Baker, 1998). Delayed parenting is also reflected in the media. Older mothers are seen in advertisements, in movies, and on television shows. Books and magazine articles support bringing up a baby later in life. Growing up with your children is no longer the norm (Schlesinger & Schlesinger, 1992).

Between Friends

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Some women delay parenting, then find that they cannot have children. They may attempt to have children through the use of reproductive technologies, but the success rate is still quite low, and many women end up being denied

the parenting experience. Elizabeth Bartholet, an American professor, claims that many of these women who are unsuccessful with assisted reproduction could have enjoyed the parenting experience through adoption. She feels that Canadian society encourages women to expose themselves to the disappointment of unsuccessful fertility treatment by placing more value on childbearing than on the actual experience of parenting (1994). Another issue to consider is the emotional health of the women who cannot conceive, even with assisted reproductive technologies. A study conducted by Harvard University in 1993 found that anxiety and depression among infertile women was similar to that of women who were dealing with cancer, heart disease, or were HIV-positive (Kershner, 1996).

research study | Family and Childbearing in Canada: A Demographic Analysis

by T. R. Balakrishnan, Sociology Professor, University of Western Ontario; Evelyne Lapierre-Adamczyk, Professor and Director of the Departement de demographie, Université de Montréal; and Karol J. Krotki, Sociology Professor, University of Alberta

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are Canadians' attitudes regarding family size, timing of births, and family planning?
2. How do expectations within marriage, value of children, and satisfaction or utility from work outside the home affect childbearing?
3. How do religion, ethnicity, education, income, place of residence, and female labour-force participation affect fertility and marriage?
4. How do separation and divorce affect fertility behaviour?
5. What are the patterns of contraceptive use?
6. What are the implications of reproductive behaviour for population and aging?

HYPOTHESIS

The change in the institution of the family is the primary determinant of recent reproductive behaviour.

RESEARCH METHOD

The researchers used the *survey method*. They collected information from women in the reproductive years between 18 and 49. Random household telephone numbers from across Canada were sampled. A total of 22 169 households were called and 5315 interviews were conducted.

RESULTS

- Most Canadian couples expect to have 1 to 3 children. Couples use various forms of birth control to manage family size and timing of births.
- In the past, couples had children because it was the norm for all married couples to complete their union by seeking happiness through the birth of children. Couples are now more interested in a personally fulfilling life. They are deciding to have children for their own personal satisfaction, not because of societal expectations and traditional values. Couples are delaying childbearing because of work outside the home. More women work outside the home before and after childbirth.

- Many factors that influenced fertility in the past no longer have as great an impact. Higher rates of fertility used to be related to religion, ethnicity, and language of origin. Important determinants are education, place of residence, religiosity, and female labour-force participation. They still lead to lower fertility rates; however, the strength of their impact has narrowed. The impact of income has almost disappeared. Delayed childbearing is influenced by education, urban residence, and work delay. It is important to note that this does not have a significant effect on family size, since couples who started childbearing earlier in life tend to use sterilization as a means of contraception in order to limit family size. Religiosity, or religious attendance, is an overwhelming factor. Those who attend church regularly are less likely to cohabit, less likely to divorce, and have larger families.

- Couples who divorce are more likely to have married young, below the age of twenty; are less religious; and are more likely to have had premarital births and conceptions.

- Canadians start using contraceptives early. Many use them before pregnancy and between first and second pregnancies. Canadian women want to control the number and timing of births. After they have reached the desired family size, many Canadians resort to sterilization as a permanent means to control fertility.
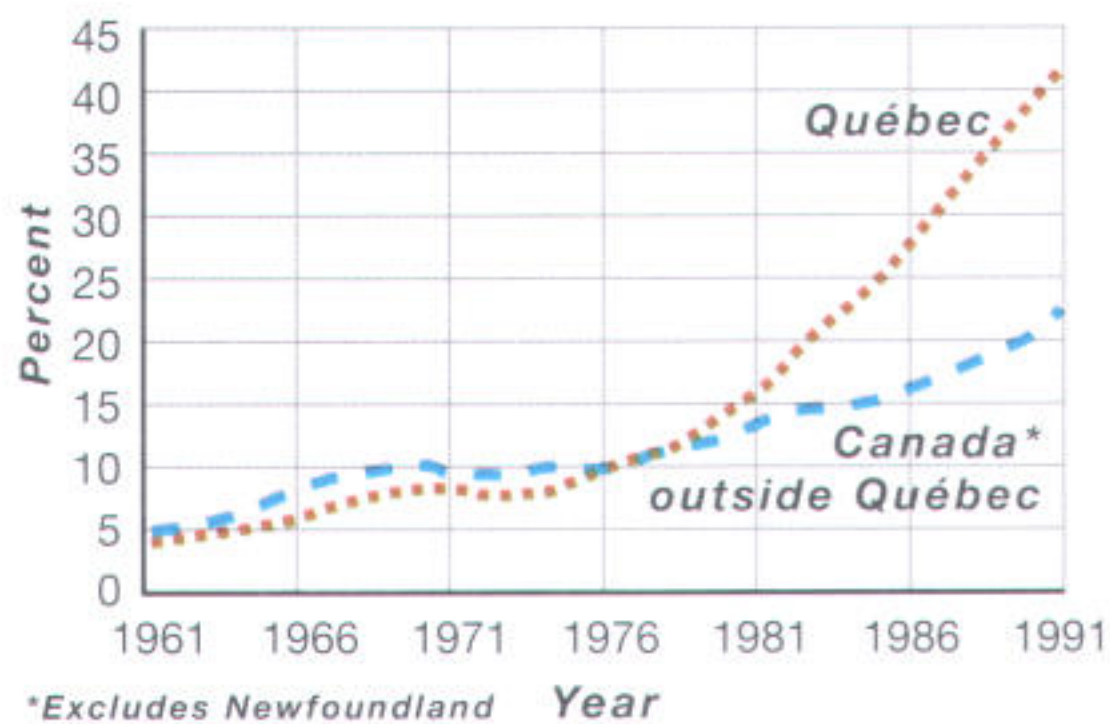
- Very few of the respondents expected to depend on their children in old age, and thus this was not a motivating factor in childbearing. Most would not want to live with their children in their old age, and would prefer to live independently or in a seniors' home.

CONCLUSIONS

Canadians are taking more control over their fertility by controlling the timing, spacing, and number of children they have. Some Canadian women are delaying childbearing until they are older in order to complete their education and begin careers. Canadian women are working before and after the birth of their children. Factors that historically led to increased fertility, such as ethnicity and religion, no longer have as strong an influence as in the past. The fertility patterns of Canadians are more consistent now than in the past. Couples who divorce tend to have married younger and had premarital conception or births. Few Canadians expect their children to care for them in old age. As a country we need to heed these changes in our social planning for day-care facilities, schools, and seniors' services. Fertility rates are now below replacement and should be considered when forming immigration policies. ■

Births Outside of Marriage

Although the Canadian birth rate has been steadily declining, births by women outside of marriage have increased. In 1971, 9 percent of births were to unmarried women. This number increased to 14 percent in 1981 (Eshleman & Wilson, 2001). Another significant change in births outside of marriage is the age of women who are giving birth. In the past, births outside of marriage were primarily to women in their teens. Now, more than half of all unmarried mothers are over the age of 25. Many of these women are cohabitating at the time of birth. The birth rate for unmarried women is highest in Québec, where cohabitation is more common than in any other province in Canada (Eshleman & Wilson, 2001). The symbolic interactionist perspective suggests that this change reflects individual women having an impact on the norms of society and changing how unmarried mothers view themselves, and an increasing acceptance.

Proportion of Births to Unmarried Women, 1961–91

*Excludes Newfoundland

Proportion of All Couples with Children Living Common Law

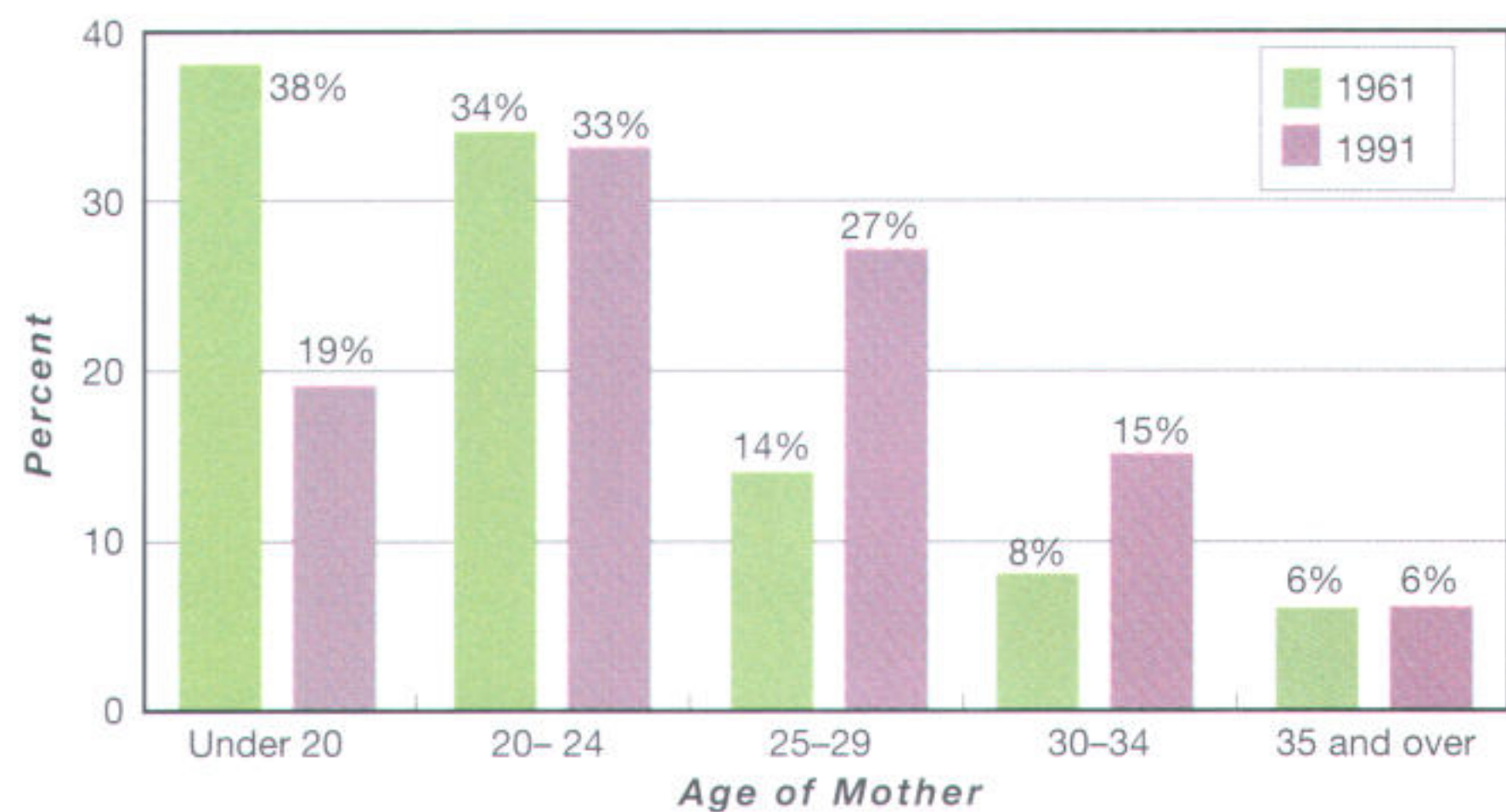Québec 4%   Canada outside Québec 3%

Québec 14%   Canada outside Québec 6%

Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada publication, *Canadian Social Trends*, Catalogue 11-008, Spring 1994.

Proportion of Births to Unmarried Women, by Age of Mother, 1961–91*

Legend: 1961, 1991

| Age of Mother	1961	1991
Under 20	38%	19%
20–24	34%	33%
25–29	14%	27%
30–34	8%	15%
35 and over	6%	6%

*Excludes Newfoundland

Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada publication, *Canadian Social Trends*, Catalogue 11-008 (Spring 1994).

Teenaged Births

Teenaged births have always been a concern in Canada, since there is considerable evidence of the negative long-term effects of teen childbearing (Eshleman & Wilson, 2001). In 1994, the rate and number of births by teenaged women were lower than they were in 1974. Now, almost as many teenagers have abortions as live births. Canadian teenagers have lower pregnancy rates than their American counterparts. One reason cited for this difference is that Canadian teens have more education about contraception and more access to contraceptive products. Other reasons cited were that American teens are more willing to take risks and that they are more ambivalent about sex.

Percentage Distribution of Outcomes of Teenage Pregnancy, Canada, 1974–94
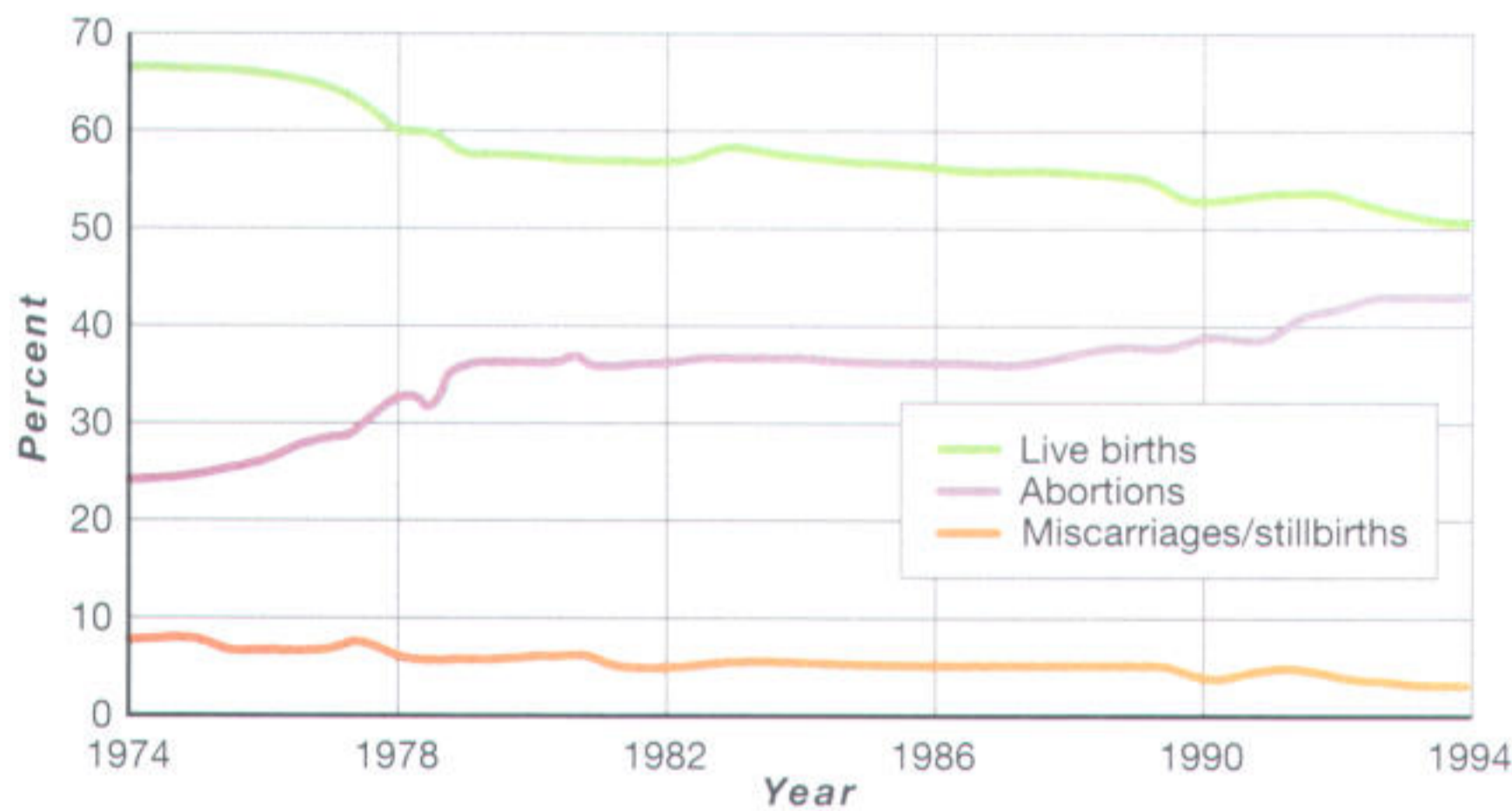
Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada publication, *Health Reports*, Catalogue 82-003, Winter 1997, Vol. 9, No. 3, pg. 12.

Number of Children

The birth rate in Canada has been declining steadily since the last half of the twentieth century. According to Lapierre-Adamczyk, in 1960 the birth rate in Canada was 3.8 children per family. Now it has declined to 1.5 children per family (Campbell, October 2000). A small family of two to three children is now the norm (Balakrishnan, Lapierre-Adamczyk, & Krotki, 1993).

Factors Influencing Fertility

Year of Birth	Risk Ratio for Having a Third Child*
Before 1945	**1.76**
1945–1954	1.06**
1955–1964	1.07**
After 1965	1.00
Age of woman at birth of first child	
Under 25	2.53
25–29	1.60
30 or over	1.00
Interval between first two births	
Less than 30 months	1.00
30–53 months	0.66
More than 53 months	0.31
Marital status	
Not in union	0.63**
Common-law union	1.05
Married	1.00
Employment status after second birth	
Working	0.65
Not working	1.00
Education	
No secondary completion	1.31
Secondary completion	1.00
Post-secondary completion	1.02**
Province of residence	
High fertility rate	1.17
(Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta)	
Average fertility rate	1.00
Religious attendance	
Weekly	1.46
Other	1.00
Number of siblings	
None	0.96**
One	1.00
More than one	1.11**
Place of birth	
Canada	1.00
Europe and North America	0.80
Other countries	1.48

* Numbers greater than 1.0 indicate a high correlation between the factor and the chances of the woman having three or more children. A ratio of less than 1.0 indicates that the factor is negative. A factor of 1.0 indicates that there is no influence by that factor.
** Not statistically significant

Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada publication, *Canadian Social Trends*, Catalogue 11-008, Summer 1999.

Ann Walmsley

I have two wonderful children, but I've mused about having a third ever since a couple of attempts ended in miscarriages some years ago. I tend to pine at the most subliminal suggestion of larger families. In fact, any family-life scene can get me started—a magazine car ad that portrays three children in the back seat, a television commercial showing sisters phoning each other long distance, my brother's young children, even the bags of toys in our basement.

I suppose for some people, the question of how big the family should be remains unresolved throughout adult life. Longing wrestles with logic and it becomes hard to know when you have finally put the decision behind you. Other couples seem enviably sure of the magic number of children for them—even before they are married. They tend to talk about "a nice round number" or "an even number so one will not be left out" or "the same number of siblings as I had growing up." A few leave it to fate. But most of the parents interviewed for this story wanted to control the outcome in some way, and ended up weighing everything from finances and health risks to the number of bedrooms in the house and the desire to have both boys and girls.

Regardless, life has a way of scuttling such plans. Fertility problems, accidental pregnancies, and luck of the draw in terms of gender often factor in. Those who elect to have a small family when their kids are young and needy may find themselves revisiting the issue as their children become more independent. And sometimes when parents divorce and then remarry, they decide they want more children with their new spouse.

Conversely, a few regret having as many children as they did. Baby lust gives way to reality and the

Deciding how many children to have is often a difficult decision for a couple.

enormous responsibility of caring for each child. Said one mother frankly of her marriage and eventual separation: "Three children brought us together; four put us over the edge." The whole subject evokes some very raw emotions, and parents' candor seems to stem from their search for the right answer. "It's the only decision we ever make that we can't go back on," says Margaret Fisher Brillinger, a Toronto marriage and family therapist with a background in parent education. "If you marry and it doesn't work out, you can get a divorce. If you buy a house you don't like, you can move to another house. But once you become a parent, you can't become an unparent."

Despite the very personal nature of the decision, Brillinger says that a third party can help couples sort through the issues and identify the unconscious feelings or needs that may be influencing their judgment. Brillinger herself is deft at separating reasons that are

based in fantasy from those grounded in reality (see "Myth Conceptions" on page 292). "There is no ideal number of children in general," she says. "You have to think about each parent's own developmental stage or timing in her career path, the strength of the marriage relationship, how tasks are divided, whether or not stepchildren are involved, and the parents' time and energy. Adding another child is not just adding a person, it is adding a whole new set of complex interactions."

Although anecdotally there appear to be plenty of three-children families these days, statistically, Canadians are having fewer kids than they did 20 years ago. According to Statistics Canada, the total fertility rate was 1.66 births per woman in 1994, down from 1.83 in 1974. Women born in 1930 had the largest families this century: 3.39 children.

An unspoken reason for large families earlier in the century was to compensate for lower child survival rates. Even today, some parents are willing to voice that fundamental fear of losing a child, explaining that it can have bearing on their thoughts about family size. "I decided that if I only had two and something happened to one of them, then there would be an 'only child' to deal with me in my old age, so three was the number we thought would be good," says Sheri Grant of Port Coquitlam, British Columbia. But the growing number of older first-time mothers, the greater participation of women in the work force, and the rising cost of childrearing have combined to drive fertility rates down. The cost of raising a child in Canada from birth to age 18 is about $160 000, according to 1998 statistics from the Manitoba government. Add to that Statistics Canada's figure of $32 000 for a four-year university education (including campus room and board), and you're talking big bucks.

Some parents who have opted for large families say that the determining factor for happiness is the parents' ability to enjoy chaos. "Once you go beyond two, you enter a different level of parenting because you don't have time for them all," says Roy MacGregor of Kanata, Ontario, an adoring father of four children aged 15 to 21, and author of the popular children's book series *The Screech Owl Mysteries*. But MacGregor claims that he loves noise and turmoil and is now aching for a younger child. His solution? "I've created my own fictional 11- and 12-year-olds in the series. They exist in my head."

In addition to concerns about giving enough time to each child, parents worry that having more children will limit the extras they can offer them, such as music lessons and travel. But according to Dave Wright, who has seven children ranging in age from six to 24 (five of whom were delivered by C-section), this should not be the deciding factor when discussing how many children to have. "People who are 'just waiting until we can better afford it' should raise goldfish instead," says Wright from his home near Rodney, Ontario. "If you have the capacity for the love that it takes, don't let anything or anyone stop you." Wright, a banker who works from home, and his wife, Raina, a stay-at-home mom, say they can afford only one activity a year per child, and the kids accept that. But they do have ample time for each child. "I still manage to go to almost all of the school recitals and we play together and read together every day," says Dave. "I even know the names of the girls my teenage son likes. And they all give you challenges, but they don't compound because one child may be struggling with toilet training and another is worried about boyfriends."

The Wrights had intended to stop at three children, but changed their minds after a surprise fourth pregnancy. The pregnancy was medically precarious for months but ultimately successful, despite doctors' predictions. The couple, who are devout United Church members, took it as a sign that more children were

preordained. So they took no birth-control measures and had another three, stopping only when Raina reached the age of 40.

There is a certain exhilaration in letting nature take its course, but more often than not, parents seem to form their idea of what constitutes a whole family from a grab bag of psychological and personal impulses. Loree Burnham of Merritt, British Columbia, says that she can't explain why the number three sticks in her head. "We know how smoothly things ran when we had two roaming around," she says. "Oddly enough, though, I felt that I needed more children to feel like a whole family." Charlotte Pepin, a mother of three in North Bay, Ontario, says that having a crop of kids close together is her way of fulfilling a missed opportunity in her own childhood. Because her three siblings were much older, she grew up feeling like an only child. Pepin, whose children now range from nine months to seven years, always said that she wanted five or six children, but settled on the idea of four as more realistic. In her mind is a dream moment, probably seven years down the road, when her current three and an as-yet-unconceived fourth will be old enough to play board games together and go camping. "All the things I never got to do," she says.

In contrast to the boisterous atmosphere that the Pepins enjoy, the Smith family of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, has found a sense of completion with only one child. Lisa and her husband, Darrin, made the decision to stop at one when their son Avery was only four months old. Lisa suffered from postpartum depression and has concluded that she does not want to endure it again, while Darrin, an only child himself, had always expressed his wish for a one-child family.

According to Brillinger, this desire to follow the model of the family you grew up in is a common, albeit unconscious, factor. Still, Lisa Smith claims that negative comments from others in the community have led her to believe that "this choice isn't widely accepted in today's society—at least not in the small town where we live. People say that we will have a bad child, a spoiled child. One person said, 'But what would happen if something happened to this child?' As if having two or 20 more children could ever replace that life. Imagine!" Despite these pressures, the Smiths are ardent about their choice and delighted to offer their son undivided attention.

The most difficult realization for some parents is that their choices may be limited by external factors such as disagreement with a partner about the desired number of children. Another hard reality: Raising kids can be tougher than imagined, and may change your outlook. Francise Turcotte-Boucher of Kapuskasing, Ontario, says she and her husband are having second thoughts about their original plan to have three kids because of their trouble coping with a challenging second child. "The personality and temperament of your children are important factors in deciding whether to expand the family," says Turcotte-Boucher. Their two-year-old son bites and hits his older sister and parents, screams to provoke reactions, and thwarts any attention paid to his sister. "We wouldn't want to deny our oldest more attention by having a third child when she has already missed so much attention because of her brother."

Health risks to the mother can also complicate the decision. Edwina Mills's experience with hypertension during pregnancy was a key reason why the Maxville, Ontario, teacher and her husband, Stephen, decided to stop after two children. Doctor-ordered bed rest and hospital stays were a routine part of her pregnancies and restricted Stephen, an archaeologist, from doing field work. But like many parents who are forced to make this decision, Edwina revisited the issue frequently. "My heart still ached when I saw

mothers with their new babies," she says. "I had not thought of our younger son as our last and I was somehow left wanting. Never again would I feel the warm snuggle of a child burrowing his face into my shoulder looking for that perfect comfort zone." It was only when her period was overdue some months later and she panicked at confronting another high-risk pregnancy that she was able to put the decision behind her. "My period finally did arrive one week and three pregnancy tests later, and our decision to be content with two children came with it."

There was a time when my daughter made fairly regular requests for a baby brother, which is a factor that many parents don't anticipate: a sibling's own yearnings. In our case, a kitten and two fire-bellied newts seemed to fulfill her desire to some extent. But I often look at my daughter and son walking together down the sidewalk and wonder if their lives would be fuller with another sibling tagging along. Then I see them laughing over a shared joke and I realize that it isn't the number of children that counts, but the quality of family interaction: the intimacy, the humour, and the desire to spend time together. In that sense I know we are fortunate—and complete. ■

1. What are the factors to take into consideration when deciding on the number of children to have?
2. According to Brillinger, why is the parenting decision so important?
3. What are some of the factors that are lowering fertility rates in Canada?
4. What are the concerns of parents of larger families?
5. What are some of the reasons couples had more than two children?

Myth Conceptions

Toronto marriage and family therapist Margaret Fisher Brillinger points out that a variety of myths tend to influence couples' decisions about family size. Here she exposes some of the most common ones:

1. Just because children are close in age does not mean they will be friends.
2. Having four children does not settle the concern that one child will be routinely left out of a three-child family. The key to solving this problem is to encourage children to mix with their siblings in different ways at various times, sometimes dividing in terms of age, sometimes by interests, etc.
3. Remarried couples with stepchildren should not immediately have their own baby to knit the family together. The first task is to integrate the existing children into the blended family.
4. Having more children will not compensate for emptiness left from a lack of intimacy or love in your own childhood.
5. The model of your own childhood might not apply in 1998. It may be that five-kid families were fine a generation ago, but there can be several reasons why five won't work for you now.
6. The idea that the bigger the family, the happier is a Hollywood concoction. Many are, of course. (Brillinger herself has four children.) But big families are also hectic and involve balancing many demands.
7. A baby does not bring a couple together when they are experiencing difficulties in their relationship.
8. The idea that a child of a certain gender will offer a different or specific type of parent-child bond may be illusory. Those bonds have more to do with personality than gender.

Childlessness

Recent studies have surveyed childless couples to determine their attitude toward children in their future. The Canadian Fertility Survey results, by T.R. Balakrishnan, Evelyne Lapierre-Adamczyk, and Karol Krotki, showed that even though at the time of the survey 35.2 percent of the women were childless, only 9.6 percent expected to remain childless (1993). When discussing childlessness it is necessary to consider whether a couple remains childless by choice or naturally.

	All Women		Ever-Married		Currently Married		Never-Married
Age at	Childless at survey	Expect to be childless	Childless at survey	Expect to be childless	Childless at survey	Expect to be childless	Expect to be childless
18–19	94.3	15.0	56.2	4.0	59.4	4.5	16.0
20–24	74.5	9.0	45.2	3.1	47.2	2.9	11.9
25–29	39.9	7.9	25.6	3.7	23.9	3.1	20.6
30–34	21.6	10.5	12.6	6.3	11.0	5.2	39.8
35–39	14.5	10.9	11.2	8.6	10.0	7.4	47.1
40–44	10.1	9.3	6.8	6.4	6.6	6.2	77.1
45–49	7.9	7.9	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.5	92.1
Total	35.2	9.6	15.7	5.7	15.4	5.1	20.4
Number of women	5315		3884		3283		1431

Percentage of Women Childless at Time of Interview and Expecting to Remain Childless by Marital Status

Source: Balakrishnan, T.R., Lapierre–Adamczyk, E., & Krotki, K. (1993). *Family and Childbearing in Canada: A demographic analysis.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Childless by Choice

Even though 90 percent of the population wants to be parents, not all couples feel that way. Couples who choose to remain childless challenge the traditionally held belief that children are a natural and desired part of marriage (Ishwaran, 1992). The term **voluntary childlessness** is given to couples who deliberately decide not to become parents, either biologically through childbearing or socially through adoption (Schlesinger & Schlesinger, 1992).

Not all couples choose to remain childless for the same reasons. Some couples decide very early on in their relationship that they do not want to have children, while others make the decision gradually during the course of their marriage. For some couples the decision to remain childless is mutual,

while for others one member convinces the other to remain childless. In some marriages one member of the couple would have had children if he or she had been married to someone else, while other childless couples would not have had children regardless of who they married. Reasons for not having children vary from a rejection of a child-centred lifestyle, in which life revolves around the child's needs and wants, to the attraction of an adult-centred lifestyle, in which the needs and wants of the adults are of foremost importance (Larson, Goltz, & Hobart, 1994). The social exchange theory provides a rationale for childlessness. These adults do not see the benefits of childbearing as a fair exchange for the time, energy, and money they have to contribute to raising a child.

The lifestyle of the childless couple is very different than the lifestyle of parents. Couples without children can pursue personal interests and hobbies without having to worry about child care or scheduling their interests around those of their children (Ishwaran, 1992). Studies have shown that marital "satisfaction among couples who remain childless is higher than among parents (Eshleman & Wilson, 2001).

Natural Childlessness

Couples who cannot bear children of their own are called infertile. Many infertile couples desperately want to have children who share the same genetic history. Often they spend years being tested and treated and trying a variety of reproductive technologies. Infertile couples want to have blood-related children in order to carry on and preserve the family tree. They do not want to miss out on the parenting experience. Some do not want to disappoint their parents by not making them grandparents. By remaining infertile the couples interrupt the life cycle of both themselves and their parents. Consequently, much social pressure to have children is put on them (Daly, 1995). Studies have shown that couples who experience natural childlessness also experience a great deal of stress in their lives. Frustrations over childlessness often have an impact on other aspects of their lives, including work, finances, and social life. This can cause strain in relationships with family, friends, and coworkers (Eshleman & Wilson, 2001).

Adoption

The number of Canadian children placed for adoption has decreased in the past two decades. In 1980, 5376 children were placed for adoption compared to 2836 in 1990. There are fewer adoptions of children under the age of one

since there are fewer infants available. Most children who are up for adoption are older and, therefore, harder to place. The number of private adoptions, in which the mother puts the child up for adoption through a means other than the Children's Aid Society, has increased in recent years. The decline in the number of children available for adoption is not due to an increase in the number of abortions but an increase in the number of mothers raising their children on their own. Of the women who give their child up for adoption, 51 percent do so because they feel they are too young to be a parent. Other considerations are the inability to care for a child financially, and the disruption the addition of a child would cause to education or career plans (Eshleman & Wilson, 2001).

Adoption provides for the social continuation of the family, since it allows families to pass on their patterns, customs, and values. It does not provide for the biological continuation of the family. The biological ties and histories of adoptive children are often ignored. Consequently, they are often unaware of important genetic factors that may be helpful for them to know about in the future (Daly, 1995).

Attitudes Toward Childbearing

In the past, the value of children was different than it is today. In the seventeenth century, children were seen as objects of affection and discipline and as a valuable source of labour in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Now, children are viewed as a source of developmental satisfaction that is accompanied by a set of monetary costs (Daly, 1995). Couples having children in Canada today are doing so because they feel that it will fulfill them and add to their relationship. They question whether or not having children will make them happier. If the answer is yes, then they have children. Canadian women place considerable importance on personal relationships and love as being necessary for happiness. Couples today do not look to traditional institutions and values in the same way that couples did in the past. They need to see parenthood as having emotional benefits (Balakrishnan, Lapierre-Adamczyk, & Krotki, 1993).

Childbearing and Intergenerational Concerns

Reduced fertility has an impact on the older generation. As parents age, there are fewer children to care for them in their senior years. However, it appears that Canadians are not relying on their children to support them financially in the future. Parents surveyed expected emotional support and personal care from their children rather than money. Today's parents do not anticipate that

they will have to live with their children. Couples are not having children to have someone to support them financially or to live with when they are older (Balakrishnan, Lapierre-Adamczyk, & Krotki, 1993).

Role of Society in Childrearing

In today's society, the family has handed over many of the functions it performed in the past to other institutions and agencies. Families once educated their children. Today, children are socialized, taught, and raised in schools for approximately 20 hours every week (Schlesinger & Schlesinger, 1992). Families used to provide most of the recreational opportunities for their members. Now, they seek recreation in places like hockey rinks, soccer fields, movie theatres, play groups, parks and other recreational programs, drop-in centres, and various other places. Children are coached and socialized by a number of non-family members when they participate in different recreational activities.

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case study | Deciding to Have a Child

Steven Harris and Carol Mehisto met in 1972 during their first year at Laurentian University and have been together ever since. Both Steven and Carol came from large families. Carol was born in Thunder Bay, Ontario, and is the oldest of five children. She spent her high school years in Toronto living with her aunt, while the rest of her family lived in Ghana. Steven, along with his sister and brother, was born in England. His family emigrated to Canada when he was four, and he grew up and went to school in a small town north of Toronto.

Like some of their generation, Steven and Carol lived together for a period of time before getting married. They rented a tiny basement apartment near Kensington Market in Toronto. Steven attended classes at the School of Social Work, and Carol enrolled in an education program at the University of Toronto. Soon after, Carol decided that she didn't want to be a teacher and got a job in a local library, where she worked while Steven attended classes. They

Life in Sault Ste. Marie wasn't what Steven and Carol expected it to be. Discovering Carol couldn't conceive only added to their problems.

were married in December 1977, five months before Steven completed his master's degree in social work. Upon graduation, Steven was hired by the City of Toronto, where he worked in the Welfare Department. However, his real interest was in public housing, so when a job opening became available in the Ontario Ministry of Housing in Sault Ste. Marie, Steven applied for it and got it.

Life in Sault Ste. Marie wasn't what Steven and Carol expected. After the initial excitement of buying a house and "settling down" in a community, they ran into some problems. Carol was unable to get a job of

any kind, let alone one that interested her. Although the people in the community were friendly, Steven and Carol found that, as outsiders, they had a great deal of difficulty making new friends. They joined the local curling club and began to attend church services in the hope of meeting other young couples, but that didn't work. As well, Steven's job did not turn out to be as interesting and as challenging as he thought it would be. He discovered that he was only managing housing issues and was not involved in policy and decision making, which was being done at the Ministry offices in Toronto. His job also took him away from home for long periods of time, since his office administered public housing across Northern Ontario. Carol began to feel very lonely and isolated and yearned for something more fulfilling in her life.

Carol began to raise the issue of having children. They both loved children and had enjoyed spending time with Steven's older sister, Pam, who had a daughter. Both of them knew that raising a family was part of their dream, but they hadn't planned to have children until later, when they were both established in their careers. As Carol was not working, and felt emotionally and intellectually unfulfilled, they eventually decided to start a family. Unfortunately, she did not become pregnant over the next few months. This added to their dissatisfaction and frustration.

Soon after, they made the decision to move back to the Toronto area, where many of their friends and family lived. Steven was able to secure a transfer to the Ministry of Housing office and Carol began to work again in the library system, although she could only get part-time work. They bought a three-bedroom house in a quiet east-end neighbourhood, just up the street from the local elementary school. Carol and Steven settled into an active social life with their family and friends. At this point, Steven had been promoted into a more interesting position in the policy department at the

Ministry and was making more than enough money to support Carol and a family. Carol really didn't like her job, and yearned to be a mother. Eventually, they went to a fertility clinic for advice, but continued to be unsuccessful. Their infertility began to put a strain on their relationship. Tired of being teased by family members, they began to withdraw from family social activities, since Carol found it hard being around her three young nieces. The fact that most of their married friends had begun families made them more frustrated and unhappy, since conversation and social activities with them inevitably began to centre around children.

Although adoption was not something that they had previously considered, they began to apply at various adoption agencies. This led to contact with other couples in the same situation, and they soon organized a support group for infertile couples that continues to this day. Their activity in this organization provided both of them with tremendous satisfaction, particularly since they were able to mentor other couples who were experiencing the same frustrations they had been feeling. Finally, in the spring of 1984, through a private agency, they adopted a son, Jeremy, and their family became complete. Much to their surprise, Carol became pregnant six years later, and in 1991, their daughter Kaitlyn was born. ■

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1. What factors motivated Steven and Carol to have children?
2. What effects did their fertility problem have on their relationships with each other and with their extended families?
3. Using the perspective of symbolic interactionism, suggest the effects on Carol of not being able to have a child, of adopting a child, and of having a biological child.
4. What adjustments would having children require in Steven and Carol's relationship?

Places of worship provide for the religious needs of families. The state and other agencies provide for families' security and safety (Ishwaran, 1992).

There are many ways that the larger society influences children outside the local community. One such influence outside the family is television and the mass media. Children spend up to 31 hours a week watching television. The mass media, including television, movies, music, and video and computer games, has become a large part of their lives. Consequently, children receive many messages from the mass media, and its influence on them has become a source of concern. Sometimes the messages transmitted by the mass media are not those that parents want their children to receive. Now, parents have to compete with the media in the socialization of their children (Schlesinger & Schlesinger, 1992).

Other influences outside the family are the people who provide care for children. While parents are at work, many of their children spend part of their day in the care of someone else. Some children are cared for by licensed child-care providers, day-care centres, nursery schools, and licensed home care. Other children spend time with unlicensed providers in private homes. These non-family caregivers also have an impact on the socialization of children (Ishwaran, 1992).

With this change in the way outside agencies interact with families and children, one function of parents has become co-ordinating the use and effects of the agencies. Parents are now responsible to ensure that the outside agencies have a positive impact on the everyday life of their children (Ishwaran, 1992).
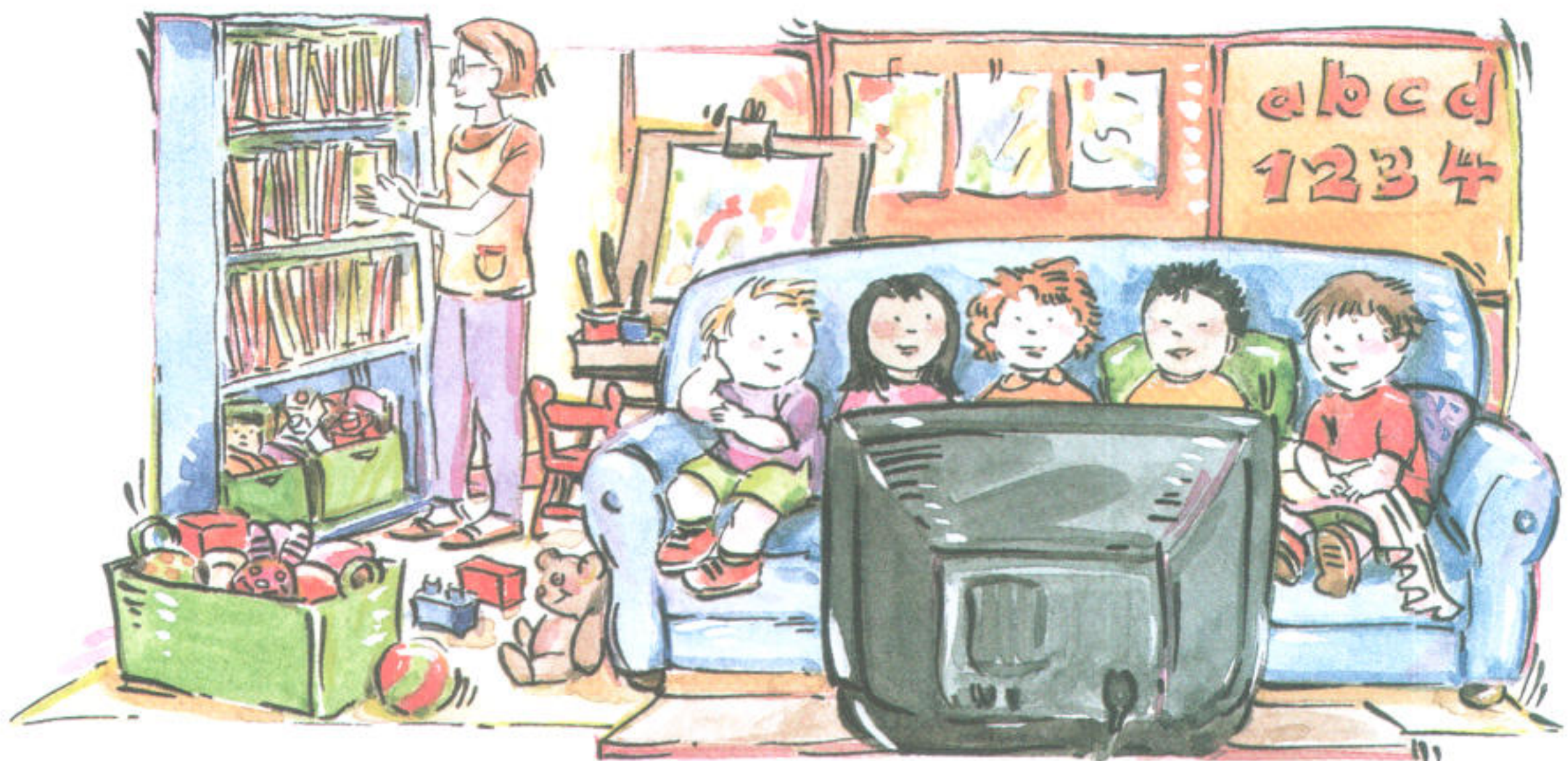
Charts and graphs can be used to display the information gained through primary research, thus adding a different dimension to the reporting of your results. Using a visual presentation to convey your information will enable you to clearly and concisely illustrate the material to be presented.

Most word processing packages include a spreadsheet program. Use the following steps with the spreadsheet program to create charts to present research findings.

1. Organize the data you have collected from your survey. Make sure that you have tallied your answers by category.

2. Open the spreadsheet program.

3. Type in the answers to the question across the top row of cells.

4. Type in the results across the next rows of cells, using as many rows as there are possible types of answers. See the example below.

5. Use the mouse to select all the cells into which you have entered information.

6. Look in the menu bar for the chart function. Depending on the software program, it could be listed as a chart wizard, as an insert, or under options.

7. The chart function will allow you to choose the type of chart or graph you wish to make with your data. It will prompt you to add a title to the chart or graph as well as label the axes.

Charts and graphs are best used for closed questions. ■

Example: Survey results from the question "How many children do you expect to have?" done with a class of 31 students.

	A	B	C	D	E
No. of children desired	1	2	3	4	5 or more
Total	4	15	7	4	3
Female	1	8	4	2	1
Male	3	7	3	2	2

1. Summarize the changes that have taken place in childbearing and childrearing practices in North America since the time of hunter-gatherer tribes. Describe characteristics of the past that you still see in existence in current childbearing and childrearing practices.

2. Discuss the childbearing practices of your grandparents and how they differ from that of your parents. Was there a difference in practices between your maternal and your paternal grandparents?

3. Look at the fertility rates chart on page 282. Make note of the changes occurring between 1986 and 1997. Explain why these changes took place. Predict what changes you think will occur between 1997 and 2007.

4. a) How many children are in your family? Ask your parents or guardians, grandparents, or other older parents you know what factors they considered when determining the number of children to have.

   b) How many children do you think you will have? What factors will you consider?

5. Summarize the impact of the following on childbearing in Canada.

   a) decline of family wage

   b) increased divorce rate

   c) developments in contraception

   d) female employment

   e) genetic testing

6. Research the childrearing practices of another culture, past or present. Present your information in a chart format. Consider the following:
   - time period
   - value of children in general
   - value of male and female children
   - attitudes toward children
   - discipline

7. Using the social exchange perspective, analyze the costs and benefits of delayed childbearing. Write an essay arguing an opinion about the trend of delayed childbearing, and support it with arguments based on your analysis.

8. Choose a genetic disease to study. Study a web site for that disease and find out if there is genetic testing available to determine if a couple is liable to pass on the disease. Investigate the following:
   - known interventions
   - risk factors
   - numbers of children and pregnancies affected each year in Canada

   Present your information to the rest of the class in the form of an electronic presentation.

Knowledge/Understanding   Thinking/Inquiry   Communication   Application

9. Investigate infant mortality rates in Canada from the early 1900s to the present. Use a computer program to create a graph to show how rates have declined over the past century.

10. Are the intentions of the students in your school toward childbearing consistent with those of adults? Develop a research question and design a short survey of students in each grade in your school. Write a brief report, using graphs to present your results.

Parents and Childrearing

CHAPTER EXPECTATIONS

While reading this chapter, you will:

- describe the development of parent-child relationships, drawing on a variety of theories
- explain several theoretical perspectives on the role of the parent in the development and socialization of children, and describe supporting evidence from published research
- evaluate parenting styles and strategies for achieving developmental and socialization goals, using socialization theories as criteria
- evaluate opinions and research on the subject of working mothers and related issues
- identify the role that different types of social institutions and systems have in the rearing and socialization of children
- analyze the division of responsibility for childrearing and socialization, and the interaction of caregivers
- select and access secondary sources reflecting a variety of viewpoints
- demonstrate an understanding of research methodologies, appropriate research ethics, and specific theoretical perspectives for conducting primary research

KEY TERMS

attachment
authoritarian
  parenting
authoritative
  parenting
constructive
  conflict
destructive
  conflict
insecurely
  attached infants
intact family
normative event
permissive
  parenting
primary caregiver
reference groups
securely
  attached infants
significant others
universal day
  care

RESEARCH SKILLS
- conducting observations and experiments
- compiling and summarizing results using theories of socialization
- writing an anecdotal summary

Being a parent is a lifelong commitment that offers many rewards.

CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the development of parent-child relationships. The parents' role in the socialization of children will be investigated using socialization and developmental theories. The nature and impact of the following parent-child relationships will be explored: the parents' marital relationship, parenting styles, the perspectives of both parents, and the parents' work situations. A discussion of adult-child relationships would not be complete without examining the influences that other caregivers have on a child's development. The research used throughout this chapter will reflect psychological perspectives.